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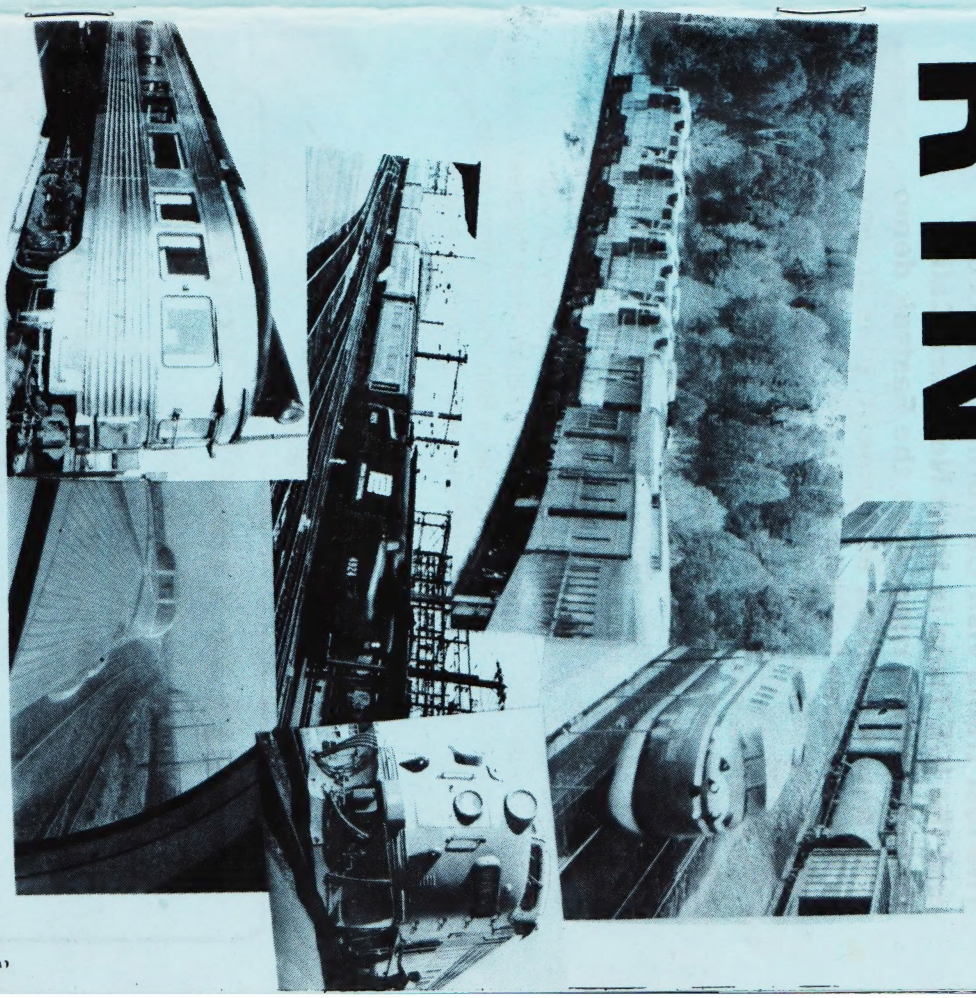

HERE'S THE LATEST ISSUE

cover Pg. "a"

#151

RTN announces a new video!

Exotic Visitors

The fast trains visit California. The X2000 and the ICE Train in their Northern Calif. demonstration runs. Also the Fastrak demo with new Metrolink equipment, plus steam.

This video covers the following rail events:

* The X2000 run Oakland-Salinas round trip, trackside and on-board scenes, cab ride on SP's curving line between San Jose and Salinas.
* The German ICE Train visits San Francisco. Trackside and on-board films San Francisco to San Jose.
* The SP's Fastrak demonstration of proposed commuter service Oakland to Martinez and beyond. Trackside and on-board films of brand new borrowed Metrolink equipment.
* A surprise ending: steam excursion leaves Berkeley CA with Daylight-painted cars, dome and observation. Hear the steam whistle meld into an Amtrak horn as a San Joaquin train meets the steam train! Just a lucky scene—we couldn't have done this if we had planned it!

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cover & page "b"

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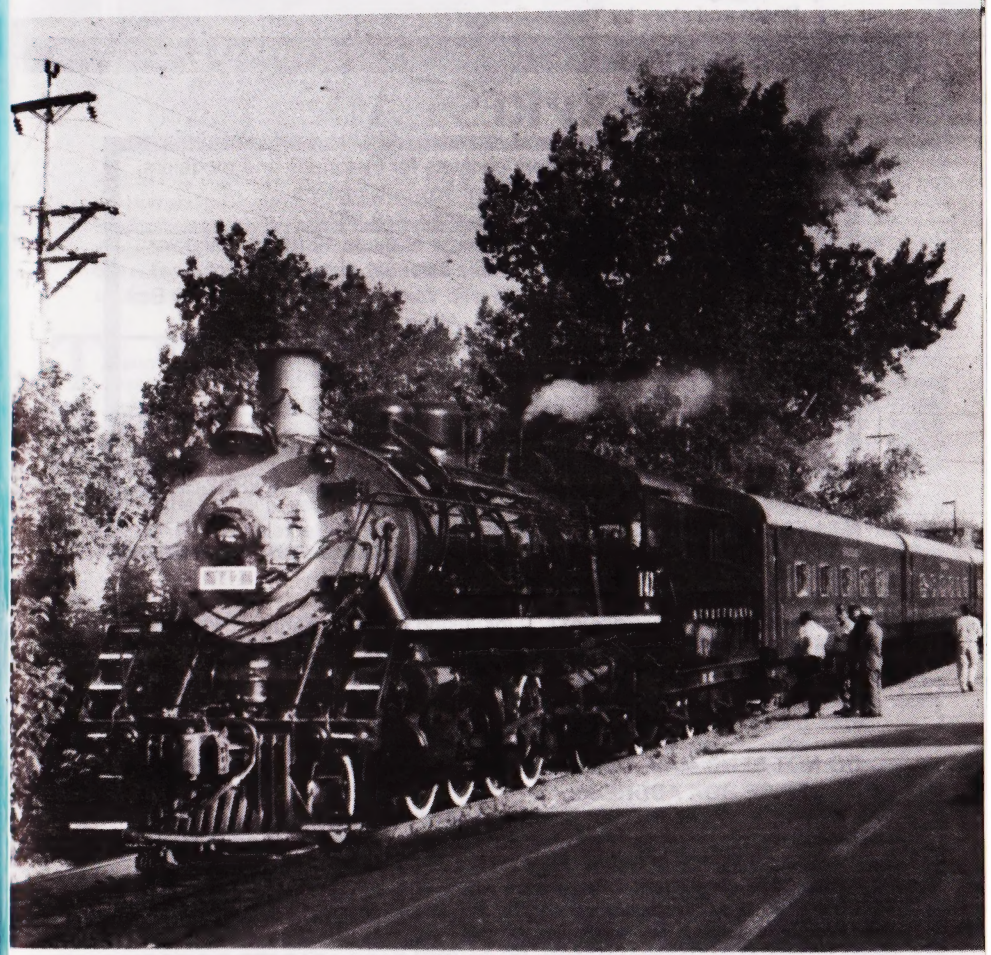
SEPTEMBER 15, 1998

RAIL TRAVEL NEWS



American Orient Express

THE COVER STORY

In August the Vermont Railway chartered NYS&W's Chinese-built 2-8-0 No. 142 and four coaches for a series of excursions over their lines in Vermont. On Aug 8 and 9, roundtrip excursions were run between Burlington and Rutland; on Aug 29 a Rutland-Bellows Falls round trip was run, and on Aug 30 a Rutland-Whitehall-Ludlow-Rutland trip was run. The trips were staffed by volunteers from the Massachusetts Bay Railroad Enthusiasts, a group well known for sponsoring top-notch excursions.

This photo is of the Aug 9 trip preparing to depart the Burlington VT station for Rutland. One photo runby was held on the southbound leg of the trip at a rock quarry two miles south of New Haven VT—a very well executed runby with superb sunlight.

Photo and story by Teresa Renner.

EXPRESS ADS

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EAST COAST REPORT

Amtrak P42 engine 101 is on the head end of Keystone Service train 648 as it prepares to depart the Harrisburg PA station for New York on Apr 29. After using mostly diesels on this electrified line for the past several years, Amtrak announced earlier this year that they will return to the use of electric AEM7 locomotives next year. A contractor recently offered to provide service on this line using electrified equipment, but Amtrak is not now considering this proposal. Photo and caption by Alex Mayes.

The Bridgeport & Port Jefferson Steamboat Company ferry "Grand Republic" suffered a cracked propeller shaft in mid-August and was taken out of service, leaving one boat, the "Park City", to provide service on a revised schedule. The "Grand Republic" was sent to Newport RI for repairs and expected back in service Sep 2.

The company is seriously considering buying a third boat so it can provide hourly service next year. Currently, with two boats, the best they can provide are 90-min headways.

Timetable notes: Metro-North issued new timetables effective Aug 24-Sep 20. The New Haven Line got more trains serving Woodlawn. Also, Bridgeport, formerly sharing a fare zone with Stratford and Milford, now has its own fare zone, resulting in lower fares. For example, monthly fares drop to $271 from $283. One-way peak or off-peak fares go down 50 cents each. Every little bit helps.

Shore Line East timetable TT26 with no schedule changes was also issued effective Aug 24.

MBTA came out with a new timetable for the Attleboro/Stoughton Line effective Aug 3. I was hoping to see added Providence service, but none has been added yet. The main reason for this new timetable is for schedule adjustments during track work on the Canton Viaduct. Riding a delayed Amtrak train 12 on Aug 21, I saw that track two over the viaduct has been lifted and new cement decking was being installed. This and other single-track areas due to on-going electrification work caused the train to arrive Boston 43mins late. We had left New Haven 8mins late due to diesels coming out of motor storage late.

The Long Island Rail Road issued a special US Open Tennis timetable for the Port Washington Branch effective Aug 29-Sep 13. Weekend service is provided roughly every 30mins between NY and Great Neck, with hourly service to Port Washington.

New Jersey Transit issued a new timetable for the North Jersey Coast Line effective Sep 9-Oct 24. Extra summer trains have been eliminated, as well as the weekend Pony Express to Monmouth Park.

Rahway station, with two elevators from street to platform level on both the eastbound and westbound sides is now fully accessible. Work continues on the high-level platforms at Matawan and Middletown on the North Jersey Coast Line.

On a visit to Penn Station, NY, on Sep 11, I found that NJ Transit had reissued the Morris & Essex timetable effective Sep 9 through Oct 24. I assume the Boonton Line timetable was also reissued, but they had none available, as these trains all originate in Hoboken. Unusual is that the timetable

color is light green rather than the North Jersey Coast Line of the same date that is printed with dark blue ink.

Notices in the M&E timetable advise passengers that there is no weekend train service on the Gradstone Branch due to "various maintenance activities" for the duration of the timetable. Train listings all carry a "B" preceding the train number to indicate bus times. Weekday midday service will also be provided by buses, but there is no "B", so I guess you show up and see what you will be riding.

Downstairs I found new timeables in the LIRR racks, also all dated effective Sep 14. Once again the branch timetables do *not* show Long Island City departures in the main body of the schedule. I wonder if any of these, especially Montauk, Port Jefferson and Oyster Bay, will be reissued showing this, as was done last May? Individual branch timetables have two separate schedule panels, one showing arrivals and departures at Hunterspoint Avenue and Jamaica and a separate panel for the five weekday round trips between Long Island City and Jamaica. Three of these trains also call at Hunterspoint Avenue, with only two round trips running via the Montauk.

I wound up riding the last seasonal run of train 2708 from Long Island City to Jamaica. The train had a GP38, old coaches (mine with clean windows), and two parlor cars were on the rear ahead of an MP15. At Jamaica I changed to an MU to Mineola for a fantastic parade of some 50 trains in just over 2 ½ hours. This is a great place to watch and photograph trains, and you'll never have a train sneak up on you, as the gates at several grade crossings give plenty of warning.

The Ronkonkoma Branch timetable has a separate schedule panel for the Greenport trains on Sep 26 and 27, which are being bused east of Riverhead due to a bridge replacement. Lastly, a separate Belmont Park timetable effective Sep 11-Oct 25 has been issued.

Amtrak ran another Mets Special train Sep 5 from Albany direct to Shea Stadium on the LIRR. The game was due to start at 1:15pm and at 12:35pm Amtrak passenger extra #705 roared through Woodside about 3 ½ miles from Shea. The full consist was P32 705, custom/dinette 20912, coaches 21261, 21628 and 21205, and P32 707. The cars were all in full NortheastDirect livery. After the Mets beat Atlanta, the train again passed through Woodside at 5:25pm on its return to Albany.—Bob Underwood.

Metro-North Commuter Railroad reported that for the week ending Aug 30 its on-time performance was 95.2%. By line, performance was 95.3% on the Harlem, 95% on the Hudson, and 95.2% on the New Haven. M-N's goal for 1998 is 96.5% systemwide, and year-to-date it stands at 96.9%.

Metro-North reported a first-time rider's comments about the railroad: "I took Metro-North for the first time to Irvington. Wow! The train was on time, air conditioned, and clean! On the way back to New York, I figured I could get to the station a little late. My mistake: the train came in on time and I missed it. I'll know better next time."

And an employee's comments about air conditioning on M-N went as follows: "I commute every day from Poughkeepsie to Grand Central, and every day I find myself wondering why it is so cold on my train. At first I thought it was just me, until I brought the subject up to a co-worker, and she agreed... Why are the trains kept so cold? Isn't there a comfort zone we can all be happy with?" M-N didn't offer any further thoughts on this employee comment, but presumably they will check whether this is a general problem.

The Lehigh Valley-Amtrak Connection bus as of Sep 7 no longer stops at Coopersburg, but instead loads at Werley's Texaco at 5204 Tilghman St, Allentown PA, across from the Turnpike entrance. A new schedule was published as of Sep 7.

●●●

The Washington Metro, said to be the most escalator-dependent subway in the world, is abandoning its program of installing new escalators, a program begun about three years ago. The new escalators have proven to be less reliable than the old ones, so the system will emphasize repair rather than replacement. About $50 million was budgeted for new, heavier escalators that would withstand inclement weather. After about $17 million was spent, it was found that the new ones are operational about 50% of the time, far below Metro's standard of 90%. Out-of-order escalators stimulate a lot of customer complaints, especially in hot weather.

Metro General Manager Richard A. White noted that the system needs to be a "rebuilding organization", while it has been set up as a "building organization". Metro is three years away from completion of its planned 103-mile system.

SEPTA has produced its first new Philadelphia transit and street map since 1992. In the past they appeared every two years. The new one costs $6.96 and had a printing of 50,000 copies. They are for sale at major transit locations, by mail order, and at the Transit Museum Store at 1234 Market St, Philadelphia. A museum curator commented that the new map may be the most accurate map of the city every produced. It is said to list every single street in the city.

Amtrak and New York Gov. George Pataki have announced a five-year plan to improve the Empire Corridor between New York City and Schenectady. The $185-million program will allow sustained speeds of 125mph on the corridor, now operated mostly at 90mph with a short stretch good for 110mph. Plans also include a second track between Albany and Schenectady, and higher speeds between Schenectady and Buffalo, reducing NY-Buffalo travel time by an hour.

Seven Turboliner trains will be rebuilt by Super Steel of Schenectady at a cost of $140-million cost, which is to be split between Amtrak and the state. The rebuilding will include upgraded interiors with bigger seats and 120VAC power plugs at each seat pair.

About $45 million will go to the track improvements. Amtrak and the state also announced their intent not to raise fares in the corridor.

(Critics questioned spending $20 million each to rebuild trainsets that are over 20 years old when the cost is about $7.5 million *more* than Amtrak is paying for each new American Flyer high-speed train.)

Long Island Rail Road has acknowledged that the method it uses to measure the performance of its air conditioning is faulty. At an MTA committee meeting in late Sep, the LIRR released new figures for July and August showing that it had begun to pull out of a summer-long spate of car malfunctions and shortages. It also displayed a graph revealing that complaints called in from riders and crew show nearly twice as many hot cars as the LIRR's own inspectors found. LIRR President Tom Prendergast said the railroad is studying other means of ways of determining if air conditioning is working. He acknowledged that on June 27, LIRR inspectors showed only 40 cars with ineffective air conditioning, but crew and passenger complaints listed 110 cars as too hot. He admitted that the railroad's inspections "do not accurately measure what the customer experiences."

Grand Central Terminal was being rededicated Oct 1 following its restoration. The Sep 28 issue of the New Yorker carries a three-page article by Paul Goldberger on the history of the building, including a large color photo of the restored interior.

MIDWEST REPORT

On September 10 Chicago Transit Authority announced plans to convert the L station at Randolph and Wabash on the Loop to a $29 million "super station," starting in spring 1999. Included in the plans is rebuilding of the segment of the L over Wabash, removing the bridgework that obstructs vehicle traffic at street level and relocating the bases for the bents to the curbs. The project would permit permanent closure of the existing Loop stations at State and Lake (which has structural defects) and at Madison and Wabash. Unspent federal funds appropriated for the canceled "downtown circulator" (streetcar) project (80%) and tax increment financing (20%) will pay for the project.

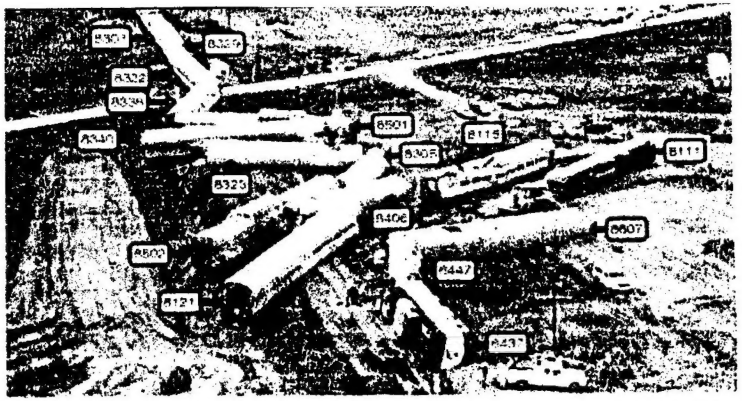
The CTA proposed September 9 to restructure its fares, including some reductions. Monthly passes would be $75 (currently $88), while senior citizen passes would be $35 (currently $44). For every $10 spent on a fare card, the machine would add $1 in value. Tokens would be phased out by June 1999 in favor of single-ride transit cards. A $5 daily pass and $20 weekly pass would be test-marketed. The basic $1.50 one-ride fare would remain the same. The plan is subject to approval of the CTA board of directors. While the changes would cost CTA about $5 million per year, the agency is betting enough additional riders would be attracted to make the plan revenue-neutral.

City of Chicago recently closed parking lots on the former site of the Illinois Central freight terminals south of the Chicago River in preparation for constructing the deck structure that will support the park over the Metra Electric (ex-IC) commuter trackage. The project will involve construction of a new Chicago station for the South Shore. Design details are being negotiated between Metra and the city.—Mike Blaszak.

The Cleveland RTA is in a long-term project to rebuild all 18 Red Line stations. On Sep 15 its trustees voted to award an $8.4 million contract for rebuilding the Triskett Road station on the West Side.

On Sep 24 city and RTA officials announced a planned expansion and renovation of the Hayden bus garage at the Windermere rapid station. Next to it will be a child care center where parents can leave their children on their way to the trains.

By Sep 1999 the Columbus-Cleveland Passenger Rail Initiative oversight committee must report to the Ohio DOT on the viability of proposed Columbus-Cleveland Amtrak service. ODOT wants to launch a 2-year, no-frills demo run between the cities starting within 18 months. The state wants to begin service for a $32 million startup cost and a $3 million annual subsidy. Locations for stations on the route are being studied.



The Transportation Safety Board of Canada in August released its report on the Sep 3, 1997 derailment of the eastbound *Canadian* near Biggar, Sask. The photo above is from the report. The aerial photo shows the derailment scene with some of the cars moved to facilitate rescue efforts. Below is part of the report reproduced virtually verbatim. As to disposition of the equipment from the derailment, baggage 8607, coach 8115 and sleeper 8323 "Dufferin Manor" were retired in April and sold for scrap. Five cars are still in storage: coaches 8111 and 8121, diner 8406 "Champlain" and sleepers 8305 "Bayfield Manor" and 8340 "Stuart Manor". Both engines, 6437 and 6447, remain out of service. Skyline cars 8501 and 8502 were returned to service in June and July. All but the three scrapped cars were deemed repairable or undamaged.

On 03 September 1997, VIA Rail Train No. 2, originating in Vancouver, British Columbia, derailed 7.5 miles west of Biggar, Saskatchewan, while travelling at about 67 mph. A section of track was destroyed; both locomotives and 13 of the 19 cars derailed. The locomotives came to rest on their sides, and the 13 derailed cars came to rest at various angles and orientations . The derailment resulted in the death of one of the 198 passengers and crew on board and injury to 78 others, 13 seriously. A small grass fire ensued, but was quickly extinguished. First responders arrived on site within 10 minutes and the evacuation of all passengers and crew was completed within approximately three and one half hours.

The train derailment initiated when the wheels of the lead axle of the trailing locomotive (VIA 6447) could no longer maintain gauge because of a fracture of the axle at a failed traction motor suspension bearing. Indication that the suspension bearing was in distress occurred well before the axle broke. An on-board hot bearing monitoring system activated an audible alarm in the controlling locomotive cab 35 miles east of Vancouver, but the system was subsequently disabled. The alarm activated about 29 hours before the derailment and less than two hours into the service life of a renewed traction motor/wheel set assembly.

Locomotive 6447, the trailing of three locomotives departing Vancouver on Train No. 2, had arrived in Vancouver on VIA Rail westward transcontinental Train No. 1 on the morning of Sunday, 31 August 1997, with the wheels on the lead axle scheduled for replacement because of normal service use. The afternoon shift foreman at the Vancouver Maintenance Centre (VMC) arranged overtime shifts for two technicians to install a previously built-up traction motor/wheel set assembly at 0300 on 01 September 1997. The same foreman would later communicate with the locomotive engineer of Train No. 2 on the evening of 01 September 1997 concerning the bearing alarm on this locomotive. The train crew operating Train No. 2 on the first leg of its eastward journey was not aware that a rebuilt traction motor/wheel set assembly had just been installed on locomotive 6447.

Train No. 2 originated in Vancouver at 2000, 01 September 1997, departing the station facility with 3 locomotives and 19 cars. While travelling between Ruskin, Mile 94.5, and Mission West, Mile 87.9, of the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) Cascade Subdivision, an alarm began to sound in the lead locomotive. The time was approximately 2130 and the train was approximately 35 miles from Vancouver Station.

There were no warning lights illuminated on the overhead console warning light panel or elsewhere in the cab of the lead locomotive. Based on the locomotive engineers' knowledge of the warning light panel, this indicated to them that the alarm originated in one of the two trailing locomotives. The locomotive crew members recalled that they initially suspected that the alarm was the result of a condition known as a continuous ground relay. A wayside hot box detector system that the train had just passed (located at Mile 96.8) had not generated any alarms; therefore, the outboard journal bearings were operating within an acceptable temperature range. Based on this information, the locomotive engineers concluded that the safety of the train was not in doubt. They believed that it would be safe to operate the train the remainder of the way to Mission Junction, Mile 87.0 of the CPR Cascade Subdivision, without restriction. They reasoned that it would be a safer place to perform an inspection and that they would be less likely to delay other traffic. At Mission Junction, also Mile 0.0 of the CPR Mission Subdivision, Train No. 2 diverged onto a connecting track where the first locomotive engineer (Engr 1) performed an inspection.

Neither the Vancouver maintenance foreman nor the locomotive engineers were aware that wayside hot box detector systems are designed to detect heat at the outboard journal bearing locations only and are incapable of detecting heat inboard of the wheels at the suspension bearing. The locomotive engineers had no knowledge of traction motor suspension bearings, their location, or function. The Vancouver maintenance foreman believed that training and knowledge of traction motor suspension bearings would be an integral part of locomotive engineer training.

Train No. 2... was operated without incident to Kamloops where the operating crew was changed. During the change-off, Engr 1 advised one of the relieving locomotive engineers that the hot bearing detection system on locomotive 6447 was "bad order" and had been disconnected at Mission. He further advised the crew that the train had been operated the remainder of the way to Kamloops without incident.

Jasper was an inspection point for Train No. 2, with 35 minutes scheduled for the inspection tasks. As the lead locomotive on Train No. 2 was the spare locomotive for Jasper, the locomotive was set off. In addition, Jasper was a crew-change location and the away-from-home terminal for both Kamloops and Edmonton VIA Rail train crews. Arriving in Jasper, the inbound crew did not relay any information with respect to the alarm on locomotive 6447 to the relieving crew. Both locomotive engineers also contacted the Jasper maintenance foreman. They advised him of a lateral sway condition they noted in the lead locomotive; however, they did not advise him of the disconnected bearing monitoring system on locomotive 6447.

Train No. 2 departed Jasper on time with 2 locomotives and 19 cars. Between Jasper and Edmonton, Train No. 2 was operated without incident. The crew from Jasper changed off with a new crew in Edmonton and the new crew left eastbound with no knowledge of the previous bearing alarm and the disconnection of the bearing monitoring system.

The trip from Edmonton to the derailment location (Mile 7.5 of the CN Wainwright Subdivision at Oban) was uneventful. Approaching Oban, Train No. 2 was slightly ahead of schedule and being operated at a speed of about 67 mph; i.e., below the maximum permissible passenger train speed of 80 mph.

Locomotive event recorder data indicated that, immediately before the accident, the train was travelling at 67 mph with brakes released, throttle in idle, headlight and ditch lights illuminating, and horn and bell sounding. Locomotive brake pipe pressure dropped rapidly from 97 pounds per square inch (psi) to 0 psi, indicating an emergency brake application attributable to a train separation. Speed decreased to 0 mph in a recorded time of 8 seconds.

(The STB made a number of recommendations for increased safety. It called for improvements on board trains, including carrying more and better rescue equipment. It noted that VIA Rail had discontinued locomotive engineer mechanical training after a company reorganization in 1993. It pointed to lack of mechanical information at various levels throughout the involved railroads and to serious miscommunications among rail personnel that caused them to overlook the impending problem of lack of lubrication of the wheel assembly that had been installed just before the train run had begun. The investigators could not determine why lubricant was not reaching the affected bearing because of the destruction of the equipment in the wreck. It faulted VIA for paying more attention to safety on its Eastern corridor than on its other trains. Many of the recommendations it made were already being implemented by the time the report appeared.)

●●●

Canadian Pacific announced Sep 21 that it had signed a letter of intent to convey its E&N Railway Company to RailAmerica Inc. E&N has freight and passenger service Victoria-Courtenay, and freight service Port Alberni-Nanaimo on Vancouver Island. The transaction includes the sale of the 68-mile section of rail line between Port Alberni and Nanaimo. Also, CP has agreed to lease to RailAmerica the Victoria-Nanaimo and Parksville-Courtenay segments of the E&N network (about 113 miles) to enable E&N to continue to provide freight and passenger service on Vancouver Island.

WEST COAST REPORT

A pair of BNSF locomotives in Heritage I and Heritage II paint schemes pass the Amtrak station in Vancouver WA in early August. Photo by Frank Tobey.

Caltrain will release around the end of Sep a study, the Rapid Rail Study, proposing a 10-15-year improvement program for the SF Peninsula commute line. One proposal is to electrify the line. Doing so, along with other improvements, would cut 20mins from the SF-San Jose trip time, making it about an hour, or faster than by auto.

The other proposals are to overhaul its equipment and stations. Caltrain wants to use $600 million that is available, most of it planned for the now-aborted downtown SF depot project, as part of $1.7 billion that would cover all the projects in the study. The choice seems to be between the electrification and the equipment-station refurbishment, though electrification alone would cost about $375 million, according to Andy Nash, Caltrain Project Manager.

Caltrain daily ridership was increased to 27,000 from 22,000 five years ago, and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission regards Caltrain as a "critical rail link" on the SF Peninsula, even with the potential competition from BART to the SF airport and possibly around the bay in the more distant future.

High Speed Rail Project meetings upcoming will be in San Francisco Oct 21 and Los Angeles Dec 16. Project officials will visit European high-speed rail sites Nov 14-21. At its Aug 19 meeting in San Diego, the California authority awarded a contract to Parsons Brinkerhoff to make route and technology selections. (This award was criticized by former TRAC president Dan McNamara and others on grounds that PB has little construction experience with high-speed rail.) Public Financial Management Inc. was awarded a contract to finalize an HSR financial plan.

At a July 15 meeting in Riverside, the Authority announced the appointment of a new Executive Director, Mehdi Morshed, a current member of the Authority. The new chairman will be Michael Tennenbaum, an investment firm manager.

The Authority is aiming for a Nov 2000 ballot measure, and for this the state legislature must pass an authorizing bill next spring.

TRAC and the Modern Transit Society, in conjunction with California Rail Foundation, will hold the California Rail 2000 Annual Conference Nov 7 in Sacramento, 8am-5pm at the Holiday Inn Capitol Plaza Hotel, 300 J St. For info on attendance, contact California Rail Foundation, 926 J St, Suite 612, Sacramento CA 95814. An optional LRT tour is available to attendees.

San Francisco Muni Railway has been buffeted by criticism in recent weeks and months, largely over the poor performance of its subway light rail vehicles after installation of a new computer system. The older Boeing-Vertol cars did not take to control by the new system, leaving only the newer Breda cars to handle traffic. Newspapers and TV news programs have been filled with horror stories of unacceptable Muni performance, and Mayor Willie Brown has seen his job approval ratings drop precipitously. His mayor campaign had included the promise of a quick fix of the Muni, already being criticized for poor bus service. In a media poll announced Sep 27, about 75% of riders were dissatisfied with the system.

In the most recent blow to the mayor, it was revealed in late Sep that Muni buses have failed to pass eight of 15 surprise safety checks by the Calif. Highway Patrol. Mayor Brown had not been told of these failures until the press learned of them, and he said he is ready to hand over important Muni management functions to a private firm.

A young white male, apparently after having drunk a large quantity of beer, drove a white Chevy minivan along the UP main line near the Davis CA Amtrak station on Sep 15. Driving between the pairs of tracks eastbound at a speed estimated to be over 40mph, he struck the switch machine for the east crossover and then ran into the crossover itself, damaging them and mangling the front of his vehicle and blowing out a tire. The UP dispatcher was called and police cars and fire engines soon appeared. The westbound *California Zephyr* and a *Capitol* train had left shortly before, and there were no other trains in the area. The motorist, 21-year-old Lukas Duncan Simonis of Carmichael CA, was taken to a hospital with his neck in a brace, for a blood alcohol test. He had a minor cut to his lip and was reportedly driving on a suspended license.

Hitting the switch box, the motorist sheared off its top cover and damaged the interior mechanism, and also sheared off a lock mechanism, as well as puncturing the oil pan of his van. The switch could not then be thrown, even manually. Within an hour, a three-man railroad emergency crew showed up to assess the damage. One *Capitol* train was slightly delayed, and a California Northern freight was delayed about an hour. The following day, a three-man crew spent the entire day repairing the switch box.

Amtrak was shipping Amfleet cars to the Pacific Northwest on the *Coast Starlight* in mid-Sep. At least nine cars were seen heading north over a period of four days Sep 16-19. Train 14 of Sep 18 carried three deadheading Amfleet cars and three express cars, in addition to its regular consist, hauled by two F40 engines. That number of express cars appeared to be a record to date for the *Starlight*.

"Friendship Fares" are back on the *San Joaquins*, and advertising for them, including radio commercials, began in September. (On the San Francisco classical music station where we first heard one of the ads, it was immediately preceded by a commercial for Mercedes-Benz that included the line "Trains are *always* late, remember?") Apparently the *Capitols* are not included in this ad drive, since BART is now handling them.

Train Riders Association of Calif. reported that Gov. Wilson will not this year veto increased funding for expansion of California Amtrak services—he did last year, and received hundreds of irate letters. TRAC President Bill Scholz said "We're very pleased that the Governor has decided to accommodate increased rail service in his budget". The increase, of $4.59 million for the planned fifth and sixth *Capitol* round trips and $4.06 million for a fifth *San Joaquin* round trip, brings the new budget total to $54,997,000 for the state's share of operating costs for Amtrak intercity rail and feeder bus services for 1998-99.

Rail Passenger Association of Calif. released its position statement on Coast rail service. RailPAC supports "New daytime service, using tilt train equipment, between San Francisco and L.A. running two hours ahead of the *Starlight* schedule and making all *Starlight* and *Central Coast San Diegan* stops with additional stops at Gilroy, Soledad, King City and Atascadero." The group supports also continued operation of the *Starlight* on its current schedule with the possible deletion of stops at Simi Valley and Paso Robles (better served by a new daytime service, RailPAC said). The group wants the *California Zephyr* extended as an overnight train to L.A. via the Coast Route. ("Currently the *California Zephyr* trainset sits unused in Oakland overnight. Extension to L.A. would only require one set of new equipment.") Also, the *Capitol* service should be extended to Salinas, RailPAC said, and daily service between San Francisco and Monterey should be established.

The group added that "All rail service along the corridor (Caltrain, Metrolink and Amtrak *San Diegans* and *Capitols*) should be integrated so that passengers can use whatever schedule is most convenient. A passenger should be able to ride an Amtrak train between L.A. and Oxnard and return on a Metrolink train."

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Los Angeles station KNBC-TV reported that residents of Pico Rivera are complaining that the Union Pacific is leaving all kinds of debris scattered around its yard and tracks, near hundreds of homes. Residents complain, the TV station said, not only of the foul-smelling eyesore itself, but also that transients and scavengers are attracted to the area. Residents and the city want the UP to clean up the property, but local authorities have no jurisdiction over the railroad property, and the practice is not illegal.

Amtrak West is working with a number of Las Vegas casinos and resorts to "partner" on rail service between L.A. and Las Vegas. No contracts have been signed, but the plan is that one set of Talgo equipment being built in Seattle will be used, running from L.A. in the morning and turning in Las Vegas for an evening return run. The casinos would sell a percentage of the seats through their own packages, and Amtrak would sell the rest. Amtrak hopes to open reservations in December, with service planned to begin in February.

No official announcement on this has been released to the press yet; this report is derived from an internal Amtrak memo to station agents.

Circus Trains, Shortlines, Narrow Gauge and Amtrak

By Miles Post

Friday, July 24 found me at Ontario (CA) International Airport boarding a plane for a couple of rail excursions in the Midwest. This was one of the last times I would be using the older terminal building. Opened for service in 1962, this facility will be replaced by a new terminal by the time you read this.

I'm going to miss the time-honored tradition of having to walk across the tarmac to access the planes. This worked well because both the front and back stairways of the plane could be used, speeding up the boarding process. The flip side was that it was crummy during inclement weather. The new terminal will have jetways and ONT will join the ranks of the big-league airports. I flew America West Flight 2340 ONT-PHX, a 737-297 (N147AW), connecting to America West Flight 2364 PHX-DTW, a 737-300 (N331AW). Upon arrival at Detroit Metropolitan Wayne County Airport, I rented a car and high-tailed it to Saginaw, arriving at the Knights Inn around 1am Saturday.

Saturday, July 25 began with a rendezvous at the front of the motel with some fellow mileage collector / railfan / friends. We caravanned by auto to nearby Reese where the Bluewater Chapter, NRHS was originating their Farmer's Festival Special, an excursion train that would be taking us into the "Thumb" region of Michigan to the "thriving" communities of Pigeon and Bad Axe.

Pigeon is the site of the annual Farmer's Festival, a combined carnival, flea market and parade, with the train playing an important role in the festivities, making two round-trip shuttles to what turned out to be the outskirts of Bad Axe. Our train consisted of Huron and Eastern no. 202 "City of Bad Axe" (GP38-2), three coaches owned and lettered for the Bluewater Michigan Chapter (BMC): 857(ex-RF&P), 832 and 829 (both ex-SOU), followed by diner BMC 899 "Silver Lake" (ex-GTW), coaches BMC 5228 and 5226 (both ex-CN), coach ATRX 3477 (ex-CNW) and Rail America no. 204 "Spirit of America" (GP38-2). Both locomotives originally came from the Pittsburgh & Lake Erie.

This line was originally built as the Saginaw, Tuscola & Huron Railroad, reaching Bad Axe in 1884 and tapping into expanding agricultural areas. In 1903 it became part of the Pere Marquette which, in turn, became part of the C&O in 1947. C&O became part of what is today CSX. As part of the massive divestment of branch lines by the major carriers in the 1980s, Huron and Eastern, a subsidiary of Rail America, assumed operations in 1986.

Not much of this region has changed since rails were first laid down in the 1880s. Agriculture still seems to be the big game in town. Perhaps that's why they were having the Farmer's Festival in Pigeon, ya' think? It's an area of flat-as-a-pancake topography and a lot of cornfields.

I remember seeing an episode of "Nightline" a couple of years ago when Ted Koppel visited the nearby small hamlet of Decker and interviewed members of the Michigan Militia. I guess when one gets tired of cultivating corn around here, he instinctively starts cleaning his guns, inspects his stockade of ammonium nitrate and fuel oil, and scans the horizon for black helicopters.

So that the shuttle train would be back in Pigeon at the prescribed time for the Farmer's Festival parade, we were denied the last couple of miles of track into Bad Axe, reversing direction a considerable distance from town. Not allowing for this snafu, one of our mileage collector "compadres" had earlier positioned his car in "downtown" Bad Axe in anticipation of a "quick escape" back to Detroit. He ended up having to hoof it into town but still managed to get back to Homewood, IL in time to work "third trick" on his job that evening!

After our train arrived back in Pigeon, we decided to forego viewing the parade and, instead, took advantage of some pre-positioned rental cars for a quick dash back to the staging area of our primary rental cars in Reese (Hertz, National and Avis love us!). Next we headed down Interstates 75 and 475 to the outskirts of Flint, and stopped by a tourist trap called "Crossroads Village." This place owes its existence to "Mott Money." Charles Mott, who founded Buick and was one of GM's largest stockholders, was also instrumental in the creation of the Mott Foundation, an executor that regularly grants generous amounts of money to Genessee County.

"Crossroads Village" consists of a reconstructed 1880s village of about thirty historic buildings that have been brought in from other locations, a paddlewheel riverboat on Mott Lake and the "Huckleberry Railroad," an eight-mile segment of the Flint and Pere Marquette's Fostoria branch that, with questionable historical accuracy, has been relaid as narrow gauge. How did this line get such a goofy name, you ask? Supposedly, the story goes, trains used to run so slowly passengers could get off, pluck a handful of huckleberries, and reboard the train without being left behind. Another more believable version is that passengers could buy a ticket to Flint and detrain at Shin's Swamp near Otter Lake, pick their huckleberries, and reboard on the train's return trip to Fostoria.

Our train was pulled by, of all things, a GE 45-ton industrial diesel that came from National Tube Works in McKeesport PA. The regularly-assigned power, former Denver & Rio Grande Western no. 464, a K-27 2-8-2 "Mudhen", was in the shop for repairs. This engine ran briefly on Knott's Berry Farm's "Ghost Town & Calico Railway" (does THAT name take "Second Place"?) until it was discovered the heavy engine was trying to straighten out the curves on a pike normally used to the lighter weight C-19 2-8-0's. Keeping in mind that DRGW never owned track east of Colorado, I suppose it was equally appropriate for the 45-tonner to be pulling our train as the steam engine. It reminded me of the Shay that's running on the Kettle Valley tourist railway out of Summerland, British Columbia. The passenger cars have some colorful histories, coming from Nacionales de Mexico, Unidos de Yucatan, Coahuila y Zacatecas, DRGW, Rio Grande Southern, East Broad Top, Diamond & Caldor and the North Pacific Coast.

Sunday, July 26: Before dropping my rental car in Ann Arbor, a nice college town (University of Michigan), I noticed that the Tuscola & Saginaw Bay Railroad operates a former Ann Arbor line that runs right through the middle of the campus. In the fifties, they used to run football specials right up alongside the stadium. Is there some reason Amtrak can't tap into that market today? Yes, I discovered Ann Arbor to be a rather interesting place, influenced to a large extent by the university's student body. In April there's the "Naked Mile", a self-explanatory event where U of M students mark the end of spring classes by running through the streets of downtown, casting off more than their textbook-laden backpacks. This is a town where, if you're caught smoking marijuana, you'll get a $5.00 citation. I wondered if one of its "sister cities" might be, say, Berkeley or Santa Monica. Maybe I'll move here when my mid-life crisis gets bad enough.

With fellow mileage collectors Don Clayton and Alan Butler, I hopped on Train 351, the *Wolverine*, for Chicago. The train had P32-8BWH no. 504, a baggage car, five Horizon cars and no. 90225, one of those F40 locomotives converted to a combination cab car / baggage car after having its prime mover removed. They've been nicknamed "cab-bage" cars. Cute. Since it was a push-pull train, I figured half the seats would be facing one direction, and half facing the other. I figured wrong. ALL the seats were facing one way — backward! The slow speed restriction through the campus of Albion College contrasted with fast and extremely smooth running on the Amtrak-owned trackage between Kalamazoo, MI and Porter, IN.

Our plan was to have a 28-minute layover in Chicago and connect to Train 335 for Milwaukee. We were losing time and started to wonder if we'd make the connection. As it turned out, Train 335 had its own set of problems and we made the connection with ample time to spare. We all know that at Amtrak, there are the schedules you see in print, and then there are the REAL schedules you experience as the trip unfolds. Our "Hiawatha Service" to Milwaukee had P32-8BWH no. 505, "cabbage" car no. 90208 (sounds like a ZIP code near Beverly Hills!) and three Horizon coaches spliced in between.

At Milwaukee we noted the modern Milwaukee Road passenger station. Opened for business just six years before "Amtrak" became part of our vocabulary, this was the last major metropolitan passenger station built in the US when private railroads were still in the passenger business. Originally a "union" station serving both the Milwaukee Road and CNW, this facility ironically owes its existence to the Interstate Highway system's appetite for urban real estate. The old CNW station a few blocks away fell victim to the wrecking ball, having the misfortune of occupying the path of a new Interstate Highway. Being in the Milwaukee Road's home town, I wondered where that railroad might be today if fate had twisted a few things just a little. The Milwaukee was a railroad that did things a little differently. It pushed a western extension to the Pacific Northwest after NP and GN had been there for years, figuring there would be enough business for everyone. For many years there was. It electrified in regions of the West on a scale unmatched by anyone. It operated those unique "Skytop" lounge cars and built other passenger cars from scratch. Like one of the Great "Might Have Been's," perhaps if the Milwaukee Road could have somehow tapped into the Powder River coal business and divvied up the loot like the other big boys on the block (BN, CNW and UP), it would still be around today. Item: Milwaukee's main line at Miles City MT was only about 150 miles from Gillette WY and the Powder River coal fields.

The conclusion of this article will appear in the next issue of RTN.

American Orient Express: A First Class Experience

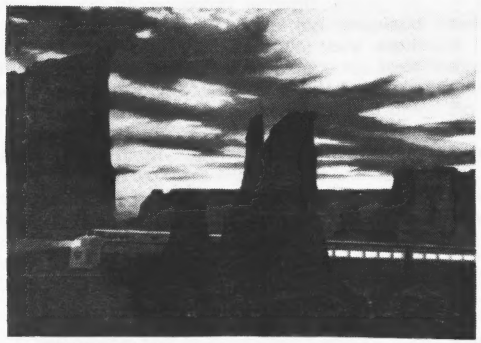
By John J. Harmon

My wife and I have long had a penchant for luxury train travel, and the chance for a trip across Canada on the *American Orient Express* was too good to pass up, especially since the routing would add a sizable number of new miles to my travel log.

We had traveled up to Vancouver BC from Seattle on the *Mount Baker International* earlier in the day (see RTN 590) and glimpsed the equipment of the *American Orient Express* emerging from VIA's maintenance shed.

Boarding began at 4pm as the staff, neatly attired in AOE uniforms, lined up at attention at the rear of the train. A porter took our bags and we began the long hike to car "Monte Carlo", near the front of the train. We visited our room only briefly, for two reasons: First, the mechanics were working on the innards of our car to try to rectify an air conditioning problem. Second, a complimentary champagne hour was about to get underway in the club cars. That would be followed by a complimentary cocktail hour and briefing by AOE tour staff. Departure was scheduled for 7:;30pm. The train was a little over half-full, and we were told we could come into the diners at any time between 6:30 and 8:30 each evening.

After getting to know some of the folks who would be our traveling companions for the next eight days, we proceeded to the diner to have a look at the menu. There were five entrees, of which two are different each evening. Also included is an appetizer, vegetable and potatoes, and dessert. A salad is also offered, although this is not noted on the menu. The chef specialized in recipes from famous railroad dining cars, and added several of his own as the trip progressed. A choice of red or white wine was included with dinner, and premium wines are available by the bottle at extra cost. For my first meal I ordered the Tourtieres (a CP Railway recipe), which is a pork pie and comes with asparagus spears and horseradish potatoes au gratin. It was excellent, and I looked forward to future meals.

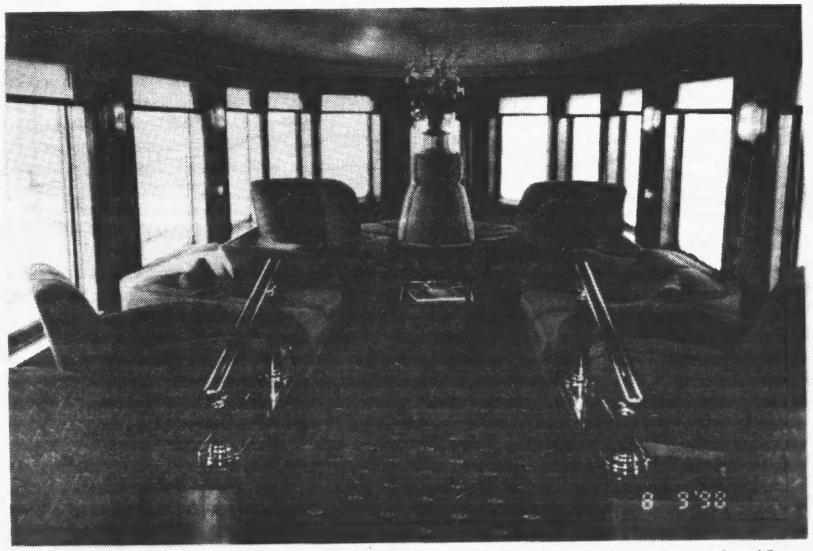


AOE's striking artwork graces the cover of its lavishly printed information brochure.

After dinner we took a little time to inspect the cars. The club cars and diners were pretty much as we remembered them from the *American European Express* of a few years ago, and the AEE logo can still be seen on the bar in the "Rocky Mountain" Club Car. The sleepers are externally the same, but have been extensively refurbished inside with wood paneling. Some of the standard bedrooms have been combined into a larger room with two lower beds, bathroom and shower. These are called Presidential Suites and command a premium fare. Unfortunately, most of them are over the wheels. Parlour Suites are the old drawing rooms and are similar to Presidential Suites except that the shower is down the hall. They have the advantage of being in the middle of the car. Standard bedrooms (also used for singles) have an upper and a lower berth. The Observation Car is the former New York Central "Sandy Creek", formerly used as a bedroom/observation on the *20th Century Limited*. The bedrooms have been removed and replaced with comfortable overstuffed chairs.

We traveled overnight to Kamloops, arriving before dawn. The train was serviced and we left at 8am, on the schedule of the *Rocky Mountaineer* (which wasn't operating in this direction today) to Jasper. We followed the Thompson River, and pass one of a series of major forest fires on the opposite bank of the river. We learned that most of Canada was extremely dry, and forest fires were a major problem this summer. A lecturer presented a program in each of the club cars before lunch. Lunch consisted of three choices and a dessert. I selected the Chicken Supreme from the Milwaukee Road, served with new potatoes and a side salad.

In the afternoon we had good views of Mt. Robson, the highest mountain in the Canadian Rockies. We were about 30mins late arriving at Jasper, as we were held for the departure of VIA train 1, the *Canadian*. Dinner was served as we sat in the Jasper station, and I chose CPR's Beef Tenderloin,



The AOE's observation club car "New York", formerly the NY Central car "Sandy Creek". Photos by the author.

which turned out to be the only culinary disappointment of the trip, as I had had a similar but tenderer cut of beef a couple of nights earlier on the *Coast Starlight*.

Friday was a non-travel day. The primary activity was a bus trip to the Columbia Ice Fields and Athabasca Glacier, followed by lunch at the Sunwapta Falls Resort. The evening was free, and many passengers found amusement in local discos.

On Saturday morning, which was free, we observed the arrival and departure of VIA train 2, the *Canadian*. It arrived as an amazing trainset of 23 cars and three locomotives. One locomotive, a Skyline car and three sleepers were removed, presumably to return on train 1 later in the day.

Our train departed as second #2, and we had a very rough night before we arrived at the seldom-seen Saskatoon depot in the wee hours. The station, which was moved away from the downtown area about 30 years ago, is remote from the city, and served in both directions in the middle of the night. It apparently is not well-used, as only three cars were seen in the parking lot. The station was closed, and there were no newspapers or phones available.

Sunday was spent on a brief tour of Saskatoon, followed by a visit to Western Development Museum, which features a good collection of antique cars and a recreated Main Street circa 1905. Then we visited the Wanuskewin Heritage Museum, a Native American Museum, where a luncheon of traditional foods, including roast bison, was served.

Interior of the AOE club car "Seattle".

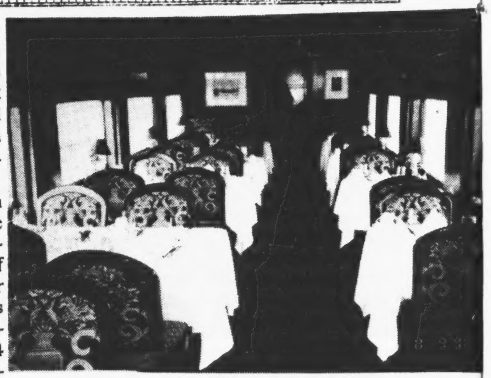
In mid-afternoon we left for Winnipeg, arriving before dawn. This is primarily a major servicing stop for the train, but we were given a brief tour of the city, visited the Manitoba Museum of Man and Nature, and had lunch at the Hotel Fort Garry. I took the opportunity to visit the casino on the seventh floor, where I made a small donation to the local economy.

We were scheduled for a 3pm departure for Thunder Bay, but the gremlins were out today. Our lead (CN) locomotive had written instructions for doing an air test with the AOE equipment, but a cleaner had done his job a bit too well, and it takes a couple of hours to find a replacement document.

We left at 5:15pm, operating via Beach Junction, where we left CN's main line to head south and east into northern Minnesota. This was new mileage, and a couple of mileage collectors (including RTN's Peter Bretz) had boarded at Winnipeg. (AOE has now become receptive to short hauls, provided space is available; call them 3-4 weeks before departure date at 888-759-3944.) We reached the international border at 8pm, and US Customs and Immigration came aboard. They appeared to be mostly interested in the contents of the liquor cabinets, which were sealed before we departed. They made no effort to interrogate the passengers, although AOE had furnished them with a list of passengers, with passport numbers and dates of birth. The stop took just 20 minutes.

We were at the border again 75 minutes later. The liquor cabinets were unsealed, and we crossed over to Rainy River, Ontario, where a new liquor supply was loaded, to comply with Ontario licensing requirements. Then we were off on an overnight trip to Thunder Bay.

Despite our late departure from Winnipeg, we arrived at the former Port Arthur depot 15 minutes early. Our main activity for the day was a visit to Old Fort William, which recreates the trading post that once occupied a site now taken over by the main line of the Canadian Pacific. Returning to the train, we departed for Longlac in mid-afternoon. This was extremely rare mileage, and we were surprised by the scenery along the line, which winds around the edge of Lake Nipigon on its way north and east. We were fortunate to travel most of this line in daylight.



The dining-room style chairs in this AOE dining car are covered with rich, exotic fabric.

Wednesday was a travel day with no major stops, although we were allowed off the train at Capreol, a servicing stop. We were to operate via Toronto to reach Ottawa, our next stop. I asked why we don't take the more direct route east via North Bay and Pembroke, and the answer was freight congestion. CN recently took its line from North Bay to Pembroke out of service in favor of trackage rights over CP.

We headed south to Doncaster, about 13 miles north of Toronto and used the York Subdivision to reach Pickering, on the Toronto-Ottawa main line. So as not to arrived in Ottawa too early and conflict with trains leaving for Montreal and Toronto, we sat several hours in Belleville. At Ottawa we had a tour of the city and a visit to the Canadian Museum of Civilization.

Departure from Ottawa was at 2pm and we arrived on time at Montreal's Central Station at 4:30 after a brief passenger stop at Dorval.

American Orient Express is not for the faint of wallet, but most of the passengers we talked to felt they received their dollar's worth out of the experience. We would definitely do it again.

AOE hopes to announce soon an expanded schedule for 1999, including a trip to Maritime Canada.

Riding the Truth Train

By Jack M. Turner

The State of Florida in Aug 1997 won a major victory in the form of an $11.3 billion settlement with the tobacco industry. From the settlement, $200 million was placed in a fund to pay for an anti-tobacco program known as the Florida Tobacco Pilot Program. The goal of the program is to educate students in Florida of the dangers of tobacco use.

The anti-tobacco campaign has relied heavily on Florida teenagers both in advertising and establishing strategies for spreading the message to their peers. The Governor's Teen Tobacco Summit, held in Haines City FL earlier this year, allowed approximately 600 teens to share ideas for developing anti-tobacco programs that could reach the state's youth. One of these ideas was to utilize a train to visit cities across Florida and bring together members of various Students Working Against Tobacco (SWAT) groups. This idea developed into the Truth Train Tour, which was scheduled to visit 13 Florida cities during summer, 1998.

CSX Transportation donated the use of a two-locomotive, nine-car passenger train primarily composed of CSX business cars, for use in the Truth Train Tour. The use of the train was valued at $250,000. The tour began in Pensacola on Friday, July 31 and proceeded east to Chipley. The following day the Truth Train traveled from Chipley to Tallahassee, where it tied up for the remainder of the weekend. On Monday, Aug 3, the train continued east to Lake City, then on to Jacksonville.

A press conference was held at each stop, and concerts and other youth-oriented events were held in each city where the train made an overnight stop. A core group of teens participated in the entire 10-day event, while others participated in localized events. At each stop along the Truth Train's tour, about 50 kids boarded, detraining at the next stop, from which they were bused home.

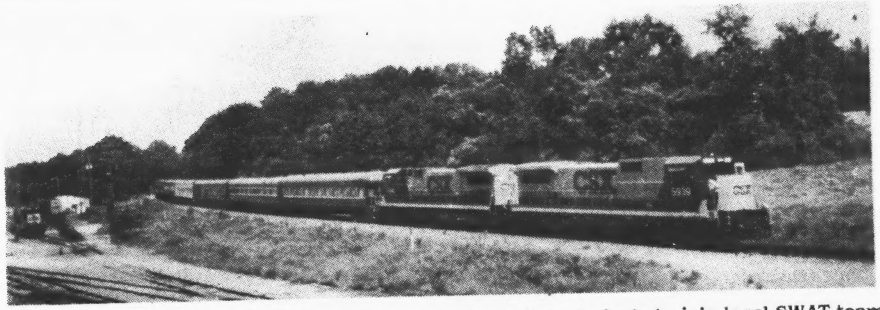
Tuesday, Aug 4 saw the train traveling from Jacksonville to Tampa via the old Seaboard "S Line" with a stop in Ocala. After a day of non-railroad events in Tamps and Clearwater, the Truth Train headed for Orlando on Aug 7 with an en-route stop in Lakeland. An Aug 8 trip to Okeechobee and West Palm Beach and an Aug 10 run to Miami concluded the tour.

The thought of a trainload of teenagers might be enough to terrify even the most avid train rider. Reality, however, was the total opposite of perception during the Truth Train's Aug 8 jaunt from Orlando to West Palm Beach. Students and adult sponsors from Orlando and the Cocoa/Titusville space coast area boarded at Amtrak's Orlando station and were seated in a former Santa Fe coach named "Mohave". The interior of the car still wore its Santa Fe Indian motif on the walls between the windows and had festive streamers and other decorations adorning the car to appeal to the younger crowd.

We were underway at 9am and soon were up to speed at 70mph. The kids were given a while to get acclimated to the train, and then were split into three groups. One group was led back to CSX theater car "Georgia", while the second group remained in the "Mohave" car. The third group was taken to CSX safety car "West Virginia", whose exterior had been covered with decals proclaiming "A Generation United Against Tobacco" and the "Truth" logo. The three groups rotated among the three cars, with a different aspect of the Truth message being covered in each car.

Sparkling central Florida lakes were seen outside as the train continued southward through Kissimmee and Davenport. Soon the first group arrived in the theater car, which contained seven rows of rear-facing seats on each side of the aisle, raised in similar fashion to a movie theater, and with a pair of swiveling captain's chairs at the rear of the car. The back of the car was covered with solid glass designed for the car's normal track inspection duty. A VCR and TV screen mounted above the rear glass panel were used to show the kids a series of anti-smoking commercials that star some of the students riding the train. Next to the video monitor were digital displays of the train speed, brake pressure, local time and outdoor temperature.

The Truth programs aboard our train were run totally by student leaders from around Florida, and they did an excellent job of energizing their peers with various ideas to use when they return to their own schools and communities. Among the most prominent targets of the Truth campaign were Hollywood filmmakers and movie stars whose glamorization of smoking, they believe, is aimed at youth. The students took time to write postcards to popular movie stars, asking them to do their part in not popularizing smoking in their movies. There was a genuine interest among participants in



the Truth program, and the kids displayed a responsible attitude during their train trip.

Numerous railfans captured the action at trackside as the Truth Train threaded the interchange track at Auburndale linking the old Atlantic Coast Line and Seaboard routes. A new group of students was brought to the theater car as the northbound *Silver Meteor* slid past just north of Avon Park. Some of the students who had just left the theater car moved forward to the CSX safety car, which was dubbed The War Room during the Truth tour. Here some of the kids were interviewed by the media and also exchanged ideas with another group of student leaders.

The train arrived in Okeechobee at 11:40am and the students from Orlando and Cocoa left us and boarded waiting Ambuses for the trip home. A new group of SWAT members from Vero Beach and Fort Pierce boarded for the trip to West Palm Beach. Joining them was Florida Governor Lawton Chiles, a leading proponent of the Truth campaign. The Governor had already ridden other segments of the train trip and would participate in the remainder of the trip.

After the 50-min stop at Okeechobee to exchange student groups and conduct a press conference, the Truth Train continued southward toward West Palm Beach. A 30-min wait in the siding at United was arranged to allow the northbound *Silver Star* to pass and to prevent an early arrival at West Palm Beach, since media coverage of the train's arrival would be heavy.

The Truth Train was the first of its kind in the US and gathered much publicity in communities along the route, as well as coverage on The CBS Evening News with Dan Rather. Sponsors hope that this publicity will lead other students to join local SWAT teams and help spread the message that smoking isn't cool to their friends. For its part, CSX did an excellent job in scheduling and operating the special train. More importantly, the railroad showed an interest in serving the interests of citizens in its headquarters state.

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Consist of the Truth Train, Orlando FL Aug 8: engines CSX 5939 & 5942 (B40-8); cars CSX 994317 "Baltimore", CSX "Kentucky", CSX "Miami Beach", CSX 994361 "Virginia", CSX 994308 "Florida", CSX 994319 "Greenbrier" diner, CSX "West Virginia", ATSF 800651 "Mohave", CSX 994318 "Georgia" theater car. The exteriors of "Miami Beach" and "West Virginia" were covered with Truth tour and "A Generation United Against Tobacco" decals. The car names and CSX paint scheme were not visible. "Miami Beach" is a former Amtrak 11-bdrm sleeper and the name is not original. "West Virginia" is a CSX safety car that usually carries various railroad displays.

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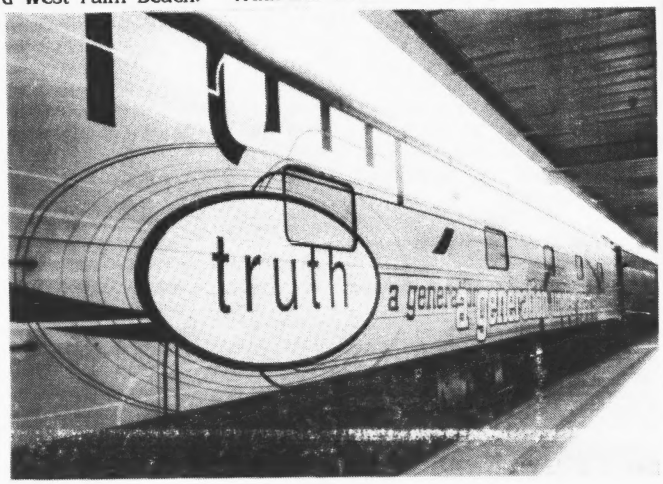
(Top photo:) At the CSX yard in Tallahassee on Aug 1. (Below:) CSX office car "Miami Beach", an ex-UP/Amtrak 11-bdrm sleeper, is unrecognizable, being decorated with Truth tour decals. Photos by the author.



MIXED TRAIN OF THOUGHTS

The Truth Train, subject of Jack Turner's article on pages 15-16, in this August 8 photo has just arrived in West Palm Beach. The train is powered by a pair of CSX B40-8 diesel units. Photo by Jack Turner.

Union Pacific crews in late September were removing the first of two crossovers where the former UP "passenger line" crossed the former Rio Grande main line south of the depots in Salt Lake City UT. The UP passenger line dates back to the days of the streamliners and gave the trains easy access to the south end of the UP depot. The line has been occasionally used by local freights heading to switch industrial spurs in west Salt Lake.

The line is being taken up as part of the removal of all the passenger track and some industrial lines, like the UP Provo subdivision, in downtown Salt Lake. This will leave both the old WP/DRGW depot and the former UP depot without any trackage. The reason is a new downtown "west side development" encompassing the land where the depots now sit. The former DRGW freight main line through the area will remain, as will the current UP main lines that head west to California. The UP passenger line is also in the way of a project to improve I-15.

Amtrak service, currently operated out of a portion of the former WP/DRGW depot, will move to a small "new" facility to handle proposed commuter rail traffic as well as Amtrak—probably something akin to an "Amshack". The new depot is to be located near 4th South (400 South) and the east side of I-15, on the Rio Grande main line, about where the DRGW shops once were located. An exact location has not been determined. The new depot location will be farther from the downtown area, about four blocks west of the DRGW depot.

The project is spear-headed by the mayor of Salt Lake and allied developers. Critics say that railroads are a low priority to them. A light rail system is currently being built in downtown Salt Lake. The first leg will run from downtown to the southern suburb of Sandy. There is talk of an east-west leg from the airport to the University of Utah, running through downtown. Commuter rail is also under discussion.

The State of Utah owns both the UP and the DRGW depots. The DRGW depot is the home of the State Historical Society, and the exact use for the UP depot has not been determined. It is opened occasionally for art exhibits. Amtrak is presently housed in a small section of the DRGW depot. Both depots still retain their neon roof signs. The WP portion of the DRGW depot was removed when WP merged into UP, but the Rio Grande portion is still there. Both are illuminated at night.

Said an observer, "There was quite a large grumble about taking the rails away from the depots, but the mayor and her buddies won out. Too bad."

●●●

The White House announced Sep 17 that Clarence V. Monin will be appointed as a member of the Amtrak Reform council. He is now the International President of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and serves on the executive committee of the Transportation Trades Dept, AFL-CIO.

On Sep. 26, the westbound *Texas Eagle* struck and killed a man who, according to the engineer, "assumed a body-building pose" while standing on the tracks facing the oncoming train. Frank Corbin, 43, had been lying on the roadbed near Little Rock, AR., until the train approached, then stood up and appeared to challenge the oncoming *Eagle*. Police reports say that Corbin was likely intoxicated at the time.

Florida Fun-Train suspended all service in mid-Sep due to financial woes.

Marc Magliari, Amtrak Intercity spokesman stationed in Chicago, left Amtrak after Sep 29 to go into news broadcast.

Amtrak NE ridership grew another 3% in Aug and premium Metroliner service kept on a record-setting pace, Amtrak said.

The Boston MBTA in Sep awarded its operating contract to Amtrak for another year.

Contributors to this issue included Bill Farmer, Alan C. Miller, Gene Poon, Miles Post, Ray Saunders and "The Colorado Zephyr". Rail Fantrips will appear again next issue.

With Hurricane Georges approaching, Amtrak on Sep 25 annulled all service south of Orlando and Tampa. Train 2 of 9/27 was annulled at San Antonio Sep 29 due to the hurricane in New Orleans. As of Sep 27, trains 19&20 were not running south of Birmingham.

Amtrak will slash its outside sales force and cut travel agency commissions in half, from 10% to 5%. Amtrak has decided that since agency sales have declined to only 29% of nationwide sales (from 40% in the 1980s) that this segment of business is unproductive.

●●●

Re-route Proposed for *Texas Eagle*

By Gene Poon

The Texas Association of Railroad Passengers has been proposing a reroute of the Amtrak Texas Eagle from its current Fort Worth-San Antonio route to one which would operate from Fort Worth to El Paso on the Union Pacific (ex-MoPac) Baird Subdivision. TXARP views the current route as a good one, but suggests that their proposed routing would be a better one which would build ridership on the train.

The TXARP proposal calls for the current, once-weekly California Service Texas Eagle to operate via the Baird Subdivision route, and for added "through" frequencies of the train to likewise run Fort Worth-El Paso. Current tri-weekly Texas Eagle trains would continue to operate to San Antonio and connect with the Sunset Limited there, but a new Oklahoma train now in the planning stages could be extended to provide service on the San Antonio line, permitting all Texas Eagle trains to use the Baird Subdivision route, while preserving service to Southwest Texas and to the state capitol, Austin.

The group recognizes that Amtrak plans to base its future on market-based analysis and practical economics, and makes its proposal on this business strategy. The newly proposed route would save 300 train-miles each way, at an Amtrak-estimated savings of $30-$50 per train-mile, or $18,000-$30,000 per trip, projected to an annual savings up to $1.5 million. The Baird Subdivision route would also slash ten hours from the current schedule of the Texas Eagle between its Chicago and Los Angeles endpoints and add major new destination cities at Abilene, Big Spring, and Midland/Odessa.

TXARP plans to announce details of their proposal to a rail advocate meeting in Dallas on November 14. In the meantime, they have been seeking support from online communities and leaders on the local and state political scene. The Abilene City Council unanimously passed a resolution supporting the proposed route change during their September 24 meeting, and set aside funds up to $100,000 for a manned station stop in their city.

Abilene's funds would pay for a station master's salary and office space in a former T&P station building already renovated and occupied by the Convention and Visitors' Bureau. The station could be upgraded to current passenger station standards for relatively low cost, in an approximate 60-day time frame, according to city officials. The city of Odessa is in the process of proposing financial incentives for a manned station stop.

The time-saving and concurrent cost-saving aspects of the reroute were driven home in the late-summer flooding around Del Rio, TX., which annulled the Sunset Limited. During the flooding, the Texas Eagle was rerouted via the Baird Subdivision, and despite multi-hour delays in getting Union Pacific pilot crews and Amtrak crews to the train, it arrived in Fort Worth five hours ahead of its schedule.

Tim Geeslin of Arlington, TX., who authored the proposal for TXARP, commented on the importance of this reroute of the Texas Eagle:

"The long term viability and survival of the Texas Eagle depends on this reroute. The Texas Eagle would pass through the major cities of St. Louis, Dallas/Fort Worth, El Paso, Tucson, and possibly Phoenix, compared to only Minneapolis/Saint Paul for the Empire Builder. A direct Texas Eagle route would probably develop into one of the premier long-distance routes on the Amtrak system."

Is Bill Gates, billionaire head of Microsoft, a closet railfan? Evidence: Thus far he has chartered a special train on the Alaska Railroad and a Canadian Pacific train across British Columbia and Alberta, and in late September began a trip that is outlined below. (The following is pieced together from on-line reports without an attempt to edit out any inconsistencies in reporting:)

BNSF/Wisconsin & Southern special, symbol O-LIVDEN1-24, was moving from Livingston, MT, into Denver (arrives Denver Sept 25, 1998) with 8-car passenger train. Power is two Wisconsin & Southern E-units, #10C & 10A, ex- Milwaukee Road units. Cars are (Amtrak numbers) 800151 Wisconsin & Southern (WS) Northern Pass, 800150 Northern Plains, 800066 Missouri River (Rail Cruise America), 800149 Northern Nights, 800588 Northern Sky, 800266 BNSF Deschutes River , 800294 BNSF Mississippi River and W&S Northern View 800148.

The train departed La Crosse on September 22nd as train O-LAWLAU1-22 arriving Laurel, MT, 14:45 on the 23rd. On the 23rd, the train moves via MRL from Laurel to Livingston, MT, where guests will board on the 24th and the train will be given back to BNSF on the 24th. Departing Laurel via BNSF on the 24th as train O-LIVDEN1-24. It's scheduled into Denver at 11:42 AM on Sept. 25th. At Denver, the UP will take the train and handle it to Barstow, CA. giving it back to BNSF on Sept. 27th.

From Los Angeles, the train will be given back to the UP for movement to Denver via San Francisco. At Denver, the BNSF business cars will be moving back to Kansas City via train Z-DENKCM7-03 departing on October 3rd at 03:30.

The remaining six Wisconsin & Southern cars (and engines W&S E-units 10A & 10C) will move back to Wisconsin as train O-DENCFD1-02 departing Denver at 12:00 on October 2nd and arriving in Crawford, WI. on Oct. 3rd.

On Monday Sep 28 the train visited the Grand Canyon. The engine numbers are WSOR 10-A and WSOR 10-C. Symbol: O-WJCLAC1-28.

20:00 MDT Sep28 Dp. Williams
22:32 Ps. Kingman
22:38 PDT Ar. Needles, change crew
22:48 Dp. Needles
02:06 Sep29 Ar. Barstow, fuel units, change crews
03:06 Dp. Barstow
04:53 Ps. San Bernardino
06:09 Ar. Los Angeles, deliver to UP at Mission Tower

Note: it is expected the train will depart Williams at least one hour earlier than the schedule shown above, in order to arrive Los Angeles by 05:00 Sep29 and get past Oxnard before the inbound Metrolink fleet begins to run. The train is supposed to go to San Francisco and then Denver. Trip ends in Denver. Deadhead move out of Denver on BNSF scheduled for Oct. 2.

(Report from Colorado:) The train was expedited over the BNSF, arriving Denver ahead of schedule at 11:10am at Denver Union Station. The UP crew was there at DUT when the train arrived, for the quickest crew change I ever saw. It departed Denver at noon Sep 25 and was highballing west of UP's Moffat Tunnel line. A great-looking train and smoothly operated.

(Report from So. Calif.:) The train was observed the morning of Sep 29 at 7:25am heading west (compass north) on the Coast Line in Chatsworth CA, about to enter tunnels 26, 27 and 28.

The crew was reporting problems with the lead BNSF unit. The train was crawling up the grade approaching the long (about 7000-ft) Santa Susana Tunnel. The Metrolink dispatcher was putting the BNSF train in the hole at Hasson siding for two eastbound Metrolink commuter trains. BNSF engine 1039, believed to be a Dash-9, was on the point at that time, followed by 10C and 10A (E9-A units). The "Northern" cars were all in maroon and silver colors, while "Missouri River" was green and the other two "River" cars were silver.

NARP reported Sep 25 that the conference committee on the 1999 Transportation Appropriations Bill HR 4328 did not meet that week, but they may meet Oct 1.

The week of Sep 14, NARP said, Congress approved a measure that in effect moves the end of the fiscal year from Sep 30 to Oct 9, giving Congress a little more breathing room to get its appropriations bills passed. However, the transportation bill seems likely to be lumped into a larger omnibus spending bill. The question is whether the transportation part of this big bill will be the final version, or whether resolving some transportation issues will be left for later.

The Senate Commerce Committee on Tues, Sep 22 held a hearing on two of the three remaining nominations to the Amtrak Board. Former Virginia Gov. Linwood Holkin and Amy Rosen, a previous Board member and NJ Transit official. Committee Chairman John McCain of AZ went on at great length about how Amtrak should have been privatized 25 years ago and quoted the recent GAO report that says only one Amtrak route is profitable. Sen. Ron Wyden, a Democrat from Oregon, expressed his anger that the *Pioneer* was discontinued even though other trains have worse economics. He said he was not prepared to vote for either nominee.

Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison, a Republican from Texas, said Amtrak is needed very much and that "You can throw that GAO report right out the window. I don't think it's measuring prospects for the future". That is an assessment NARP agrees with 100%.—NARP.

The Amtrak Board met Sep 24. They selected Wisconsin Gov. Tommy Thompson to be chairman of the board and former MA Governor Michael Dukakis vice-chairman. The new board's first responsibility will be to appoint a new Amtrak president. George Warrington, who was reluctant to take the position of acting president late last year, is now an enthusiastic candidate to become permanent president.—NARP.

Amtrak's *Piedmont* in North Carolina will operate with the state-owned full-length dome car during weekends in Oct. The car, called the "Mount Mitchell", ran in successful parlor service weekends this past summer.—NARP.

The FAA reports, according to the Journal of Commerce, that airline travel is expected to increase by 50% from 1997 to 2007. Last year there were 599 million passengers, and the FAA projects 900 million 10 years from now. With airports already crowded and air traffic control systems already in need of modernization, this should present an opportunity for coordinated effort between federal, state and private interests to improve passenger rail, perhaps along the lines of the Midwest Regional Rail Report issued Aug 31. Otherwise, federal and state governments could continue the policies that segregate the modes and figure they can spend their way out of aviation congestion by investing only in aviation.—NARP.

News in this issue is updated through Sep 30. Due to technical problems, the conclusion of "Cairo to Alexandria Aboard the Turboliner" does not appear in this issue. It will be published in the next issue of RTN.

Amtrak's *California Zephyr* train from Chicago to San Francisco will no longer stop in Colfax as of Oct 25, a move that has some local officials and residents riled. The Colfax City Council will hold a special meeting on the problem on Oct 6 to consider a resolution that seeks Placer County, state and federal assistance to keep the Colfax stop on the train schedule. The *Zephyr* can no longer stop in Colfax because it is adding time and costs to the run and both must be reduced, according to Marc Magliari, Amtrak spokesman.

Gates a railfan: (More on the Bill Gates special train; see also p. 19:) Aboard the train with Mr. Gates was the French family. Mr. Gates had a short chat with the Helena Road Foremen of Engines (RFE) 9-24-98. The RFE had a short visit with Mr. Gates in the cab of one of the E units, which included asking Gates the question, "Are you a railfan?" "Yes", came the reply! The RFE also said it was pretty quiet in Livingston, 9-24-98, before boarding time, and all a sudden about noon, limos started pulling up and letting people out. Finally, a big tour bus with the bulk of the tour group arrived and boarded.

The dome/sleeper/lounge NORTHERN SKY features a master bedroom, three double bedrooms, three showers, kitchen, full meal service, observation lounge with rear-facing windows on the lower level. Upstairs is the dome lounge. Car has retention toilets, diesel generator, stereo, TV/VCR and cellular phone. The car was built by America Car & Foundry in 1955 for Union Pacific as dome, square end observation car #9003. Auto Train bought the car from UP in 1973 for the original Virginia to Florida auto/passenger carrying Auto-Train. Northern Sky, Inc., bought and refurbished the car to its current deluxe standards in 1992.

BNSF had a crew on duty at Cheyenne, WY, at 6:15 AM, 9-25-98 for the passenger special. BNSF expedited the train via Laurel, MT, Casper and Cheyenne, WY. Under cloudless skies, BNSF hustled the special down the Front Range Subdivision in less than five hours. At Longmont, the Longmont Local requested to use the main around 8:30 AM. The dispatcher told them to stay in the clear for the passenger special. The dispatcher said the train would be at Longmont at 9:30 AM, but it rolled by at 9:10 AM!

The train had departed La Crosse on September 22nd as train O-LAWLAU1-22 arriving Laurel, MT, 14:45 on the 23rd. On the 23rd, the train moved via Montana Rail Link from Laurel to Livingston, MT, where Bill Gates and his entourage boarded on the 24th. The train was given back to BNSF on the 24th. It departed Laurel via BNSF on the 24th as train O-LIVDEN1-24. At Denver, the UP will took the train and handled it onto Barstow, CA, via Las Vegas, NV, giving it back to BNSF on Sept. 27th.

Still to occur... From Los Angeles, the train was given back to the UP for movement to Denver via San Francisco, CA. At Denver, the BNSF business cars will be moving back to Kansas City via train Z-DENKCM7-03 departing on October 3rd at 03:30. The remaining six Wisconsin & Southern cars (and engines W&S E-units 10A &10C) will move back to Wisconsin as train O-DENCFD1-02 departing Denver at 12:00 on October 2nd and arriving in Crawford, WI. on Oct. 3rd.

CARS & CONSISTS

AMERICAN ORIENT EXPRESS

***American Orient Express** (consist from John Harmon's article in this issue) Engines CN 9671, Amtrak 334 & 367 (F40s under lease from Amtrak); cars "San Antonio" baggage-food storage, "Grand Canyon" & "Pacific Star" staff sleepers, "San Francisco" staff sleeper & crew dining, "Monte Carlo" slpr with 2 Presidential suites, 8 bedrooms, formerly "Opequon" on B&O *Capitol Limited*, built 1946 for C&O, "Berlin" sleeper with 2 Presidential suites and 8 bdrms, formerly "Lake Placid" on UP, built 1954, "Paris" sleeper with 2 Presidential Suites, 2 Parlour Suites and 4 brdrms, built 1950 for SP, "Rocky Mountain" piano club car built as a 14-section slpr for UP in 1954, converted to 44-seat legrest coach in 1965, "Zurich" ex-UP diner-lounge built 1949, "Chicago" ex-UP diner-lounge built 1959, "Seattle" piano club car, ex-14-section slpr "Alpine Meadows" of UP in 1954, converted to 44-seat legrest coach in 1965, "Vienna" slpr with 2 Presidential Suites & 8 bdrms, ex-"Placid Waters" on UP, built 1956, "Istanbul" slpr with 2 Presidential Suites, 2 Parlour Suites & 4 bdrms, built 1950 for SP, "Washington" slpr with 2 Presidential Suites & 8 bdrms, ex-"City of Staunton" on C&O, built 1950, "New York" observation car delivered as "Sandy Creek" with 4 bdrms to NYC for use as a slpr-obs car on the *20th Century Limited*, built 1948.

***Three Rivers**, train 40, Akron OH Aug 30: engines 55 & 29 (GE P42s); cars 1547, 1451, 1531, 1510, 1401, 1421, 1433 & 1434 MHCs, 1720 baggage, 25094 & 25118 Amfleet II coaches, 53509 Horizon dinette, 25102 Amfleet II coach, 71120 express boxcar, 410011 US Mail Roadrailer, and 11 express Roadrailers. (Left Akron 1½ hrs late; all equipment built for Amtrak except 1729 rebuilt by Amtrak from coach or slpr.)—Bill Engel.

*Mad River & NKP RR Museum special train "Ohio State Limited", Galion OH Sep 13: engines 25 & 30 (P42s); cars 38042 diner, coaches 34028, 35009, 34081, 34024 & 34058, lounge 33041. (Trip did not sell well; four coaches dropped from consist and Museum will probably take a loss on the trip.)—George Danchisen.

***Colonial**, train 86, Newark NJ Sep 17: engine 930 (AEM7); cars 21254, 21644, 21027, 21606, 21646 coaches, 43009 cafe, 44943 custom, 20128 custom/club as full custom.

***Crescent**, train 19, Newark NJ Sep 17: engine 605 (E60); cars 1517 MHC, 1738 baggage, 2506 "Pine Peak" dorm-lounge, 62024 "National View" & 62035 "Shore View" slprs, 8551 diner, 28024 lounge, coach 25056 + four coaches and one MHC, numbers unknown. Dorm-lounge was running lounge forward and lounge had no seats in it.

***Three Rivers**, train 41, Metropark NJ Sep 17: engine 610 (E60); cars 25070 coach, 53504 "City of San Luis Obispo" Horizon dinette, 25025 coach in Phase IV striping, two 1200-series and two 1700-series baggage-mail cars, numbers unknown.—Jim Langan.

THE OPEN VESTIBULE

Something worth comment is the good San Francisco Chronicle essay on the BART takeover of planning for the *Capitols*. It's amazing the railfan fear of this—since things could not be worse than they are now.

Under Caltrans planning, an expensive modern train arrives outside my window here (at Jack London Square) quite punctually at 7:35am, then deadheads back to the yard to rest all day. If it continued on to Silicon Valley, it would probably run with standees, given the horrible freeway congestion down there. On most days the mid-morning and mid-afternoon runs are lucky to exceed a bus-load south of Jack London. But "rail advocates" seem to be obsessed with fetishes, like the non-existent absolute separation between "commuters" and "intercity" passengers, and the superior value of the latter group. Of course they are easier to serve, since less likely to complain than commuters. But the citizens of California voted those bonds because they thought a

rail revival would help ease road congestion. Seems to me they have been betrayed by a bizarre coalition of timid bureaucrats seeking an easy life and "rail advocates" who just want pleasant trains they can ride on recreational journeys.

Fred Matthews
Oakland, California.

(Letter to NARP President John R. Martin:) As a long-time subscriber to Trains magazine and a member of NARP, I am pleased that you are getting some well-deserved recognition in the "rail enthusiast press".

I agree with most of your statements; however, with respect to the Florida Service, three trains per day seem adequate service for the East Coast of Florida. As a matter of fact, the fastest-growing are of Florida is now the West Coast. I know this for a fact—I live here! We have one train a day (*Silver Palm*), which arrives and departs at ungodly hours. It is true that we have Amtrak Thruway bus service to and from the other trains at Orlando, but passengers object to a 5-hour bus ride before they ever get to the train. The refurbished Tampa station was recently dedicated, along with an equipment display. Guess how I found out about it? From Rail Travel News, which is published in California. Incidentally, this is a fine publication and they certainly do their part to publicizing the activities of your organization for which you should be grateful.

People down here—there are 200,000 people in Sarasota County alone—hardly know that Amtrak exists. They know about the *Auto Train*—by word of mouth and TV. The *Auto Train* is a first-class passenger-oriented operation and many people drive to Sanford to use it. I have used the train on several occasions, and the passengers are *not* second-class citizens.

Now to get down to a disastrous problem with respect to the operation of the *Sunset Limited*. This is a national disgrace, but no one seems to want to do anything about it. For example, trains are "days late" in addition to hours on a regular basis. Trains are frequently annulled and turned short of their destinations, passengers being bused in many instances. This happens on a regular basis. It is a known fact that SP and now UP do not want this train on their railroad and with the UP "melt-down" the situation has gone from bad to worse. Equipment utilization is pretty bad and Amtrak would be better off if the train was abolished.

I offer a suggestion to re-route this train over BNSF between Los Angeles and Kansas City, thence over BNSF (former Frisco) main line from Kansas City to Memphis, attaching the train to the *City of New Orleans* at Memphis, or run it separately from Memphis to New Orleans, thence via normal route on CSX east of New Orleans.

BNSF is a fast, high-quality railroad between L.A. and Kansas City. It will enable Amtrak to handle more mail and express via this route, taking some of the pressure off the *Southwest Limited*.

The BNSF line between Kansas City and Memphis is an efficient piece of railroad, well-ballasted and maintained. BNSF has recently been upgrading the line and I believe double-tracking in some locations.

This proposal would result in numerous side benefits in service which Amtrak and others have envisioned for some time. For example, with Amtrak Thruway bus service from Denver to Trinidad, this would enable through service without change to Florida destinations. The same holds true for Kansas City, Springfield MO and Memphis (Midwest to Florida train service without change).

The route is 706 miles longer (31%), but the advantages are overwhelming and endless. Amtrak would be dealing with a railroad that is efficiently run and desirous of making this a complete success. They may even consider restoring service on the *Sunset* from Orlando to Miami, where it should be going.

If the State of Texas and the City of Houston should object to this, let them provide a state-supported connection between San Antonio and New Orleans.

And finally, let's change the name of the train from the *Sunset Limited* to the *Golden States* (California and Florida).

Kenneth F. Roloson
Englewood, Florida.

The story on the Delmarva Special (RTN 586) was of special interest to me, a native Philadelphian with roots in Delmarva, and whose father was a lifelong employee of the PRR. I am sorry I missed the excursion!

I am not certain when the Virginia Ferry Corporation began to serve the Delmarva-to-Norfolk railroad traffic, but I think it must have been later than 1951. I recall getting off a PRR train on the Cape Charles dock and walking merely a few feet to the PRR's "Elisha Lee", an elegant old steamship, for the remainder of the trip to downtown Norfolk, after a stop at Old Point Comfort (Hampton). This trip must have been in late 1951 or 1952, as I was in the Navy at the time and didn't enlist until August, 1951.

The name "Elisha Lee" had already made a strong impression on me, because my father knew that gentleman and had admired him greatly.

Philip W. Markley
Reston, Virginia.

The Atlanta Constitution of Aug 31 carried an article on the rail funds intended for Georgia. The Georgia DOT has let it be known that they alone will control the funds for the rail projects in Georgia. Among these are the new Atlanta Terminal, the Atlanta-Chattanooga fast rail line, and the several other commuter lines planned in the state.

The Georgia DOT was called the Georgia State Highway Department prior to Jimmy Carter changing the name, back in the early 70s. You can believe that the name is the only thing that has changed. The people do not elect the members of the DOT board. These "commissioners" are powerful political appointees. These men spend many a day relaxing and golfing at resorts like Scottsdale AZ and St. Simon's Island GA. These trips are paid for by the various groups of highway contractors doing business with the State. No elected official would dare cross these men.

The projects funded for rail transportation in Georgia will face a tough uphill battle if the Georgia DOT is allowed to control them. At best they will be delayed. At worst they will never be built.

Graham H. Overton
Lawrenceville, Georgia.

The squib in RTN 589 that the AAR is suing the Surface Transportation Board over their allowing Amtrak to handle express proves yet again what dinosaurs most AAR members are. The Amtrak story of the lack of a level playing field of infrastructure support is the *whole* railroad story. The AAR hasn't yet learned the political reality that passengers vote and shippers don't. Instead of taking cheap shots at Amtrak, they should be leading the parade for equal modal support.

The express issue is a red herring. In the 1980s I solicited freight for the Family Lines (SCL-LN-GA-AWP-CRR) and the only other railroad that handled LCL besides FL was the MoPac, which became part of the UP. Both FL and MP found LCL too expensive to solicit and they happily gave their business to "consolidators", which was the new name for carloading companies. All railroads further encouraged consolidators by giving them volume "lanes" of rates between cities. The railroads' earnings along these lanes were the lowest of any commodity, but the rail management felt it still worth it because it saved a huge sales force expense.

Amtrak doesn't really hurt even consolidators, but more duplicates the former Railway Express Agency, which had always handled their traffic on passenger trains along with mail as "Head End" traffic. The UP and the AAR are wrong, wrong, wrong!

William R. Wright
Cranford, New Jersey.

QUOTES OF THE WEEK***

"GRAND FORKS, N.D., Aug 30—People here figure they can handle almost anything.

"After the thundering flood waters that last year forced the evacuation of the entire city—all 50,000 people—what could faze them? But the pilots' strike that has grounded Northwest Airlines since Saturday morning is already trying people's patience.

"...In fact, virtually everything in Grand Forks, North Dakota's third-largest city, depends in some way on Northwest Airlines. Northwest delivers the mail here. It brings medical supplies for the hospital, flowers for the florists, even goldfish for the pet stores. No other passenger airline flies in or out.

"'It'll affect just about every one of us,' said Mayor Pat Owens of Grand Forks. 'People don't usually come here unless they fly. Now, we're landlocked.'"

—Pam Belluck in New York Times, August 31.

(Ever heard of the *Empire Builder*?)

SLIP OF THE MONTH CLUB***

"Residents throughout the Northeast began the arduous and often heartbreaking task yesterday of cleaning up from tornadoes and fierce thunderstorms that cut a destructive path through the region...

"Trains arrived very late during rush hour on the New Haven line of Metro-North Railroad yesterday morning. All four tracks at the New Rochelle, N.Y., station were closed because of damage to conducting wires.

"By early morning two tracks were repaired, but 69 trains arrived in Pennsylvania Station up to an hour late yesterday morning, said Dan Brucker, a Metro-North spokesman."

—Barbara Stewart in New York Times, June 2.

(Takes a tornado to get Metro-North trains into Penn Station?)

BOOK REVIEWS

"Railwaymen, Politics & Money" was published this summer by John Murray in London, England (distributed in the US by Trafalgar Square, North Pomfret VT 05053). The author is Adrian Vaughan, the "best known of Britain's railway historians".

There have been many books on British railway history, but this one is different, according to the publishers: this one "digs more deeply. He shows why the railways began, in the spirit of Adam Smith. The early lines were free markets of transport, open to all who would pay the toll. That approach was unworkable, but many in Parliament still wanted to maximize competition between railway companies. Others saw the need for a national plan. Interestingly, the move away from free-market railways prefigures the rise of Democracy in Britain. Railwaymen even found influential support for a trade union that would win shorter hours, for the sake of safety.

"By 1870 the railway companies were great public institutions but they did not make much money. Spasmodic bouts of competition increased speed and magnificence, though not profits... The railways finally amalgamated to form a national network by 1900 but by then there were industries to attract away the capital they needed.

"During two world wars the railwaymen worked on with a nobility of purpose born of tradition, and even in the era of nationalization while the values of the steam age survived, the railways gave fine service and good employment. They mattered now not for their profits but for what they could do for the nation."

Concludes the publisher, "In 1993 the clock was turned back to 1825 again. After reading this book, you may think that was a mistake."

This 408-page hardbound book sells for $50. It includes a section of monochrome historical photos. There are abundant appendices and notes, and the book is well-indexed. This appears to be a very important volume on this major topic.

TrainWeb

http://trainweb.com

Information on Amtrak routes, schedules, prices and accommodations is provided along with a personal perspective of rail travel through travelogues and color photos. Web links and other information of interest to rail passengers, railfans and model railroaders are also featured.

Steve Grande e-mail: steve@trainweb.com

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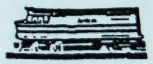

Contents of video:

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